

MESSAGE FORM
TOTAL PAGES

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GEORGE CARVER: Approved For Release 2004/10/28 : CIA-RDP80R01720R000700060030-2

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24 APRIL 1972

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TO PRIORITY SAIGON

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25X1 RYBAT

REFS A. SAIGON 47370 (IN 585686)*

B. SAIGON 47371 (IN 585715)**

(GENERAL)

1. AS YOU SURMISE, HAIG IS ON A GENERAL FACT FINDING, ATMOSPHERE CHECKING MISSION. HE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY WANT TO TALK WITH YOU AND, PROBABLY, SOME OF YOUR SENIOR ASSOCIATES.

2. THREE PRECEPTS SHOULD GUIDE YOU IN ANY CONVERSATIONS WITH HAIG: ACCURACY, CANDOR AND THE EXERCISE OF EXTREME CARE IN CHOOSING THE WORDS IN WHICH YOU EXPRESS YOUR IDEAS. HAIG IS PLEASANT, ABLE AND WELL MEANING. HE IS UNDER CONSIDERABLE STRESS THESE DAYS, HOWEVER, AND WANTS VERY MUCH (AS DO WE ALL) FOR THINGS TO COME OUT RIGHT IN VIETNAM. HE IS EXTREMELY SENSITIZED TO WHAT STRIKES HIM AS CAPTIOUS OR CARPING NEGATIVISM, AND IS PRONE BY PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND, TEMPERAMENT AND INCLINATION TO ACCEPT THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT'S WORD. (AT LEAST WITH ME) I DO NOT WANT YOU TO TRIM YOUR JUDGMENTS OR SUPPRESS INFORMATION BECAUSE IT MIGHT BE UNPALATABLE, BUT IN TALKING WITH HAIG THESE DAYS ONE

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TABLE SECRETARIAT DISSEMINATION		<input type="checkbox"/> INDEX	<input type="checkbox"/> NO INDEX	<input type="checkbox"/> RETURN TO _____ BRANCH	<input type="checkbox"/> FILE RID
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PAGE TWO

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MUST WATCH HIS LANGUAGE CAREFULLY AND AVOID FLIP PHRASES AND COLORED OR LOADED WORDS (E.G., OMINOUS, ROUT, COLLAPSE, DISASTER, ETC.).

3. RE THE PERPLEXITIES YOU FLAG IN REF B, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THEY INVOLVE QUESTIONS OF SEMANTICS AS WELL AS SUBSTANCE. LITERALLY CONSTRUED, SUCH TERMS ^{AS} "FINAL OFFENSIVE" ARE PATENTLY INACCURATE IN LIGHT OF HANOI'S KNOWN RESOURCES AND LOGISTIC CAPABILITIES. BUT SUCH LABELS CAN BE READ AS PERHAPS OVERLY CRYPTIC OR SIMPLISTIC SHORTHAND FOR A THESIS THAT IS VALIDLY ARGUABLE. HANOI HAS MADE A MAJOR MILITARY, POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL COMMITMENT IN THIS OFFENSIVE. UNLESS IT PRODUCES ENOUGH DEMONSTRABLE BENEFITS TO SUPPORT THE ARGUMENT THAT (UNLIKE THE BIG UNIT CAMPAIGN OF 1968 AND 1969) IT WAS A NET COMMUNIST SUCCESS, HANOI IS GOING TO HAVE PROBLEMS WITH ITS IMAGE, ITS CREDIBILITY AND PROBABLY ITS APPARATUS GREATER IN MAGNITUDE THEN ANYTHING THE LAO DONG POLITBURO HAS HAD TO COPE WITH BEFORE. THUS DESPITE HANOI'S CAPABILITIES IT CAN LEGITIMATELY BE ARGUED THAT IF THIS CAMPAIGN IS A NET COMMUNIST FAILURE, THAT FACT WILL ALTER THE OVERALL POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF THE INDOCHINA

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PAGE THREE

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EQUATION VERY MUCH TO HANOI'S DETRIMENT. IT CAN ALSO BE PLAUSIBLY ARGUED, OF COURSE, THAT IF THE COMMUNISTS' OFFENSIVE "SUCCEEDS," HANOI WILL HAVE TAKEN A GIANT STEP TOWARD WINNING THE WAR.

4. MY OBJECT HERE IS NOT TO ENGAGE YOU IN THEOLOGICAL DEBATE, SIMPLY TO SUGGEST THAT THERE MAY BE MORE MERIT TO PORTIONS OF BUNKER'S AND ABRAMS' POSITION THAN THEIR SHORTHAND SUMMARY PHRASES MIGHT INDICATE. AS YOU ARE ALSO UNDOUBTEDLY AWARE, BOTH BUNKER AND ABRAMS (AT LEAST UNCONSCIOUSLY) ARE PROBABLY TRYING TO PREVENT THE PANIC REACTION WITH WHICH SOME SEGMENTS OF WASHINGTON INITIALLY REACTED TO THE EVENTS OF 1968 AND EARLY 1969 AS THEY WERE REPORTED WHEN IN FACT THESE CAMPAIGNS NETTED OUT TO BE A COMMUNIST ~~DISASTER~~ DEFEAT.

5.

I HAVE

ALSO ENCOURAGED HIM TO SAMPLE THE THINKING AND OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF SENIOR MISSION OFFICERS, NOTING THAT THEY WOULD

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PAGE FOUR

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UNDOUBTEDLY REFLECT SOME INSTRUCTIVE DIVERGENCE.

6. A FINAL NOTE, YOUR REPORTING IN THIS CURRENT HECTIC PERIOD HAS BEEN ABSOLUTELY FIRST RATE: TIMELY, CRISP, CANDID AND EXTREMELY HELPFUL. I ALSO COMMEND YOUR PRECISION AND SKILL WHEN WORKING UNDER PRESSURE IN KEEPING CLEARLY DISTINCT YOUR REPORTING OF FACTS AND YOUR INTERPRETATIVE JUDGMENTS, BOTH OF WHICH ARE ~~VERY~~ VALUABLE. IN SHORT, MY CONGRATULATIONS ON AN ~~ONGOING~~ ^{ONGOING} JOB, BEING WELL DONE.

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END OF MESSAGE



Richard Helms

RICHARD HELMS
DIRECTOR

CORD MEYER, JR.
A/DDP

CHIEF, FAR EAST DIVISION

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3
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